

# Unintentional Injuries, Violence, and the Health of Young People

## Fact Sheet

### UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES & VIOLENCE

- Injuries include unintentional injuries (such as those caused by motor vehicle crashes and fires) and intentional injuries (violence and suicide).
- An injury is defined as “unintentional or intentional damage to the body resulting from acute exposure to thermal, mechanical, electrical, or chemical energy or from the absence of such essentials as heat or oxygen.”<sup>1</sup>

- Injuries are not accidents. They can be prevented by changing the environment, individual behavior, products, social norms, legislation, and governmental and institutional policy.
- Injuries are the leading cause of death and disability for people aged 1 to 34 years in the United States.<sup>2</sup>
- Injuries requiring medical attention, or resulting in restricted activity, affect more than 20 million children and adolescents (250 per 1,000 persons) and cost \$17 billion annually for medical treatment.<sup>3</sup>
- Violence is the “threatened or actual use of physical force or power against another person, against oneself, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, or deprivation.”<sup>4</sup>

### LEADING CAUSES OF INJURY MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY AMONG CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

- More than two-thirds of all deaths among children and adolescents aged 5-19 years result from injury-related causes: 32% from motor vehicle injuries (occupants and pedestrians combined), 14% from all other unintentional injuries, 13% from homicides, and 10% from suicides.<sup>5</sup>

#### Motor Vehicle-Related Injuries

- Among children and adolescents aged 5 to 19 years, 70% of unintentional injury deaths are due to motor vehicle crashes.<sup>5</sup>
- Traffic-related injuries also include those sustained while walking, riding a bicycle, or riding a motorcycle. Among bicycle-related deaths, 90% are caused by collisions with motor vehicles.<sup>5</sup>

### FIVE LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH AND NUMBER OF DEATHS

UNITED STATES, 1998, AGES 5 TO 19

RANK	AGES 5-9	AGES 10-14	AGES 15-19
1	UNINTENTIONAL INJURY 1,544	UNINTENTIONAL INJURY 1,710	UNINTENTIONAL INJURY 6,590
2	MALIGNANT NEOPLASMS 487	MALIGNANT NEOPLASMS 526	HOMICIDE 2,311
3	CONGENITAL ABNORMALITIES 198	SUICIDE 317	SUICIDE 1,737
4	HOMICIDE 170	HOMICIDE 290	MALIGNANT NEOPLASMS 720
5	HEART DISEASE 146	CONGENITAL ABNORMALITIES 173	HEART DISEASE 415

Source: CDC, National Center for Health Statistics Vital Statistics System



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National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
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## Violence

- In the United States, minority males bear most of the burden of homicide victimization. In 1998, among males aged 15 to 19 years, the homicide rate was 5.0 per 100,000 among whites; 11.0 per 100,000 among Asian/Pacific Islanders; 23.0 per 100,000 among American Indian/Alaskan Natives; 33.5 per 100,000 among Hispanics; and 72.5 per 100,000 among Blacks.<sup>5</sup>

## FIVE LEADING CAUSES OF INJURY DEATH AND

### NUMBER OF INJURY DEATHS

UNITED STATES, 1998, AGES 5 TO 19

RANK	AGES 5-9	AGES 10-14	AGES 15-19
1	MOTOR VEHICLE 794	MOTOR VEHICLE 987	MOTOR VEHICLE 5,060
2	DROWNING 243	SUICIDE 317	HOMICIDE 2,311
3	FIRE/BURN 197	HOMICIDE 290	SUICIDE 1,737
4	HOMICIDE 170	DROWNING 201	DROWNING 439
5	SUFFOCATION 61	FIRE/BURN 104	POISONING 261

Source: CDC, National Center for Health Statistics Vital Statistics System

- In 1999, 19% of high school students considered suicide, and 15% made plans to attempt suicide in the previous year.<sup>6</sup>
- The United States child homicide rate, 2.6 per 100,000 for children less than 15 years of age, is five times greater than the combined rate of 25 other industrialized countries.<sup>7</sup>
- An estimated 302,100 women and 92,700 men are forcibly raped each year in the United States. More than half of the female rape victims were less than 18 years of age when they were first raped.<sup>8</sup>

## CONTEXT OF INJURY OCCURRENCE

- Approximately 4 million children and adolescents are injured at school per year.<sup>3</sup>
- More than 1 million serious sports-related injuries occur annually to adolescents aged 10-17 years.<sup>9</sup>
- Firearms are the mechanism of injury in approximately 78% of homicides and 60% of suicides among children and adolescents aged 5-19 years.<sup>1</sup>
- From 1985 to 1996, 5,555 child passengers aged 0 to 14 years died in motor vehicle crashes involving a drinking driver; 64% of the deaths occurred while the child was riding with the drinking driver.<sup>10</sup>

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